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THE RED CROSS

IN CHARGE OF

JANE A. DELANO, R.N.

Chairman of the National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The American National Red Cross held its eleventh annual meeting in Washington, D. C., at Rauscher's, December 8, 1915. The programme was as follows:

9.30 a.m. Meeting of Central Committee.

10.30 a.m. General Session, Hon. William H. Taft presiding.
Annual reports of officers and committees.

12.30 p.m. Luncheon to delegates.

2.30 p.m. General Session.

Papers: Sanitary Work in Serbia, Dr. Richard P. Strong; American Red Cross in Mexico City, Charles J. O'Connor; An American Surgeon's Experiences in the War Zone, Dr. Rhoades Fayerweather; A Red Cross Nurse in the Great War, Lyda W. Anderson; Consolidating the Relief Forces of a City—A Story of the Eastland Disaster, Sherman C. Kingsley; Teaching First Aid to a Police Force, and Why? Major Raymond W. Pullman; Needlework Guild of America, Rosamond K. Bender.

8 p.m. Brief account of important war relief activities, Robert W. deForest, presiding. American Ambulance Hospital, Mrs. Robert Bacon; Committee of Mercy, Norman Hapgood; German-Austrian Relief Committee of Chicago, Hon. Julius Goldzier; Vacation War Relief Committee, Anne Morgan; War Relief Clearing House, Hon. Myron T. Herrick; French Emergency Wounded Fund, Mrs. Ethelbert Nevin; Commission for Relief in Belgium; Red Cross Preparedness, Mabel T. Boardman.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RED CROSS NURSING SERVICE¹

European Relief work during the past year has rather overshadowed other Red Cross activities. Our State and Local Committees on Nursing Service have met all demands made upon them for nurses and

¹ Portions of Miss Delano's report have been omitted, as they have already appeared in this department as current news.

have maintained during the entire year a long waiting list of nurses willing to accept service in the various European countries. Members of committees and enrolled Red Cross nurses throughout the country have served on supply committees and given instruction to groups of volunteer workers in the preparation of hospital supplies and surgical dressings. In some instances they have been placed in charge of Chapter headquarters for European relief and have proved invaluable in the organization of the work.

MEETINGS. A semi-annual meeting of the National Committee was not called at the time of the meeting of the American Nurses' Association in San Francisco, as it was impossible for the chairman to leave Washington for so long a journey. The second semi-annual meeting was, however, held in Washington on December 7, delegates to the annual meeting from state nurses' associations and members of nursing committees being asked to a conference with the National Committee in order that it might have the benefit of their experience and advice.

PERSONNEL. There has been no change in the personnel of the National Committee during the past year. One of the members, Mary E. Gladwin, volunteered for European Service and has been Supervising Nurse of our Unit in Belgrade, Serbia, during the entire period of its assignment to that country. The success of this Unit has been due in no small measure to her ability as an organizer and the splendid spirit of self-sacrifice which she has shown under the most trying conditions. She has faced undaunted serious illness among the members of her Unit, as well as dangers from disease and battle, and is now on her way home with the ranks of our Serbian nurses unbroken either by accident or disease.

We have 40 state and 74 local committees covering all large nursing centers in the United States with a total enrollment of over 6100 Red Cross nurses. With this large number on file we have striven to increase the efficiency of our committees, feeling sure that should our country be confronted by some definite need we should be able to reach expeditiously through well-trained committees the entire nursing personnel in the country.

DELEGATES TO ANNUAL MEETING, 1915. Each state nurses' association, organized for Red Cross service, is entitled to send a delegate to the annual meeting of the American Red Cross and the following are in attendance: Ada Finley, Georgia; Adelaide M. Walsh, Illinois; Emma M. Hunt, Kentucky; Mrs. George F. Sargent, Maryland; Elizabeth Dewey, New York; Augusta Condit, Ohio; Emma Nichols, Massachusetts; Regine White, Wisconsin; Minnie K. Bullard, West

Virginia; Lenah S. Higbee, Washington, D. C.; Kate Fowler, California; Julia C. Stimson, Missouri.

GENERAL RELIEF WORK. *Brownsville, Texas.* Late in March, owing to serious fighting across the border in Mexico and the impossibility of preventing wounded refugees from seeking shelter in Texas, it was necessary to open a temporary hospital in Brownsville, Texas. The local committees on Red Cross Nursing Service in Dallas, Houston, and El Paso were called upon and seven enrolled nurses reported promptly for duty. Antoinette Alschier, of Dallas, was appointed to act as Supervisor. The nurses sent from Dallas were, in addition to Miss Alschier, Katherine Ott, Katherine Justice, Senora Pouder; from Houston, Mrs. Lydia Drouet and Harriet Mae; from El Paso, Jessie M. Burt. They were assigned to duty late in March, the last returning to their homes May 17, having cared for two hundred and twelve serious cases with many major operations.

Eastland Disaster, Chicago. (For the report of this work see the JOURNAL of October, 1915.)

Grand Army of the Republic Encampment, Washington, D. C. (For the report of this work, see the JOURNAL of November, 1915.)

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTION FOR WOMEN.—This Department has continued as heretofore under the supervision of the Chairman of the National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service, with Marion L. Oliver in charge of the organization of classes who submits the following report for the year 1915:

During the past year there has been a great increase in the interest in Elementary Hygiene and Home Care of the Sick. . . . The course in Home Dietetics is also beginning to be better known and a textbook will be ready, it is hoped, by spring. The classes at the present moment are working from type-written notes. The course in Elementary Hygiene and Home Care of the Sick does not in any way fit those taking it for professional work, but was organized purely as an educational movement. In case of war or disaster women whose names are on file at the office of Instruction for Women as having taken the course and passed the examination might be called upon to render such assistance as lay in their power. They could serve in minor capacities as aids to the nurses, working in surgical supply station, as housekeepers, etc. The untrained American women will have a place in the great scheme of national preparedness, but it must be understood from the start that this place must be a minor one as far as the care of the sick is concerned.

EUROPEAN RELIEF. In addition to the 126 nurses sailing on the Red Cross ship early in September of last year, 24 were sent to Serbia—12 early in September and 12 more on November 21. The last group did not, however, reach their destination, Gevgeli, until near the beginning of the new year.

Yvetot. Nine nurses were sent to Yvetot, France, on February 20 at the request of Dr. Ralph Fitch, of Rochester, New York, who had been for some time connected with the Alliance Military Hospital, No. 41. Mary M. Fletcher, a graduate of the Allegheny General Hospital Training School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was selected as supervising nurse. Miss Fletcher was for some time superintendent of the Martha Jefferson Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia, and later assistant superintendent of the University of Virginia Hospital. At the time of her appointment she held a position in the Virginia Military Institute and was granted leave of absence for European service. More than half of the nurses in this group spoke French. Dr. Fitch severed his connection with the Yvetot Hospital on August 15, 1915, and requested permission of the Red Cross to transfer our nurses to a military hospital in St. Valery, France. Six of this group offered to remain after the withdrawal of our units, October 1, and are still on duty as volunteers or for nominal salaries, paid locally. Miss Fletcher has since married in England and plans to return to France with her husband for volunteer relief work.

Belgium. A request for two units came from Belgium toward the end of March and 24 nurses with Dorothy Ferree as supervisor sailed from New York April 17, 1915. Miss Ferree returned to the United States October 26, 1915, and Vashti Bartlett, one of the nurses transferred from Pau, France, was appointed as her successor. Miss Bartlett is a graduate of Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School, was for a time assistant superintendent of the Garfield Memorial Hospital, Washington, D. C., and resigned her position as superintendent of Watts Hospital, Durham, North Carolina, to accept service in Europe.

Serbia. At the request of Madame Grouitch the Red Cross sent two additional nurses to Nish, Serbia, to assist in the establishment of a hospital and dispensary for babies. They sailed on July 31, 1915, and Mrs. Maud Metcalf who had recently returned from nearly a year's service with one of our units in Kiev, Russia, was sent as supervisor for the Hospital. She was by experience well-qualified for this special work and accustomed to the trying conditions of European travel at this time. Unfortunately their work was interrupted soon after their arrival, not only by the Austrian military operations to the north, but by the entrance of Bulgaria into the war. In order to secure their protection and believing that their work would be more effectual, these nurses have been recently withdrawn to Sofia, Bulgaria.

Bulgaria. Two of our Red Cross nurses have been in Bulgaria for several months. Helen Scott Hay, who went over on the Red Cross Ship as general superintendent of nurses and who was on duty with the

Russian units for nearly a year, was transferred to Bulgaria in June, 1915, at the request of the Queen to take up the establishment of a training school for nurses, a plan interrupted by the outbreak of war last year. Soon after her arrival, the Queen asked for an additional nurse to act as assistant, and Rachel Torrance, who had served under Miss Hay in Russia, was also transferred. Since the declaration of war by Bulgaria, they have been occupied in developing a nursing service for the Army from the personnel available in Bulgaria. The two nurses from Serbia will be added to this group.

We have sent to Europe since the beginning of the war 255 Red Cross nurses, 70 of this number to relieve those returning. In several instances transfers have been made from one country to another in order to lessen the cost of transportation. Six nurses were transferred from Paignton, England, and six from Pau, France, to La Panne, Belgium, to fill vacancies.

There was an outbreak of typhus fever among our nurses and doctors in Gevgeli, Serbia, within a few weeks after their assignment to duty. Realizing that it would take some time to send relief from America, we called on our nearest unit, the one in Pau, France, for volunteers telling them of the situation in Serbia. Dr. Kirby-Smith, the senior medical director, Margaret Lehmann, supervising nurse of one of the Pau Units, Anna C. Lofving, and Rebecca Watson expressed their willingness to go and left promptly for Serbia. Additional nurses were also sent from America to aid in the care of our sick personnel and to relieve those able to return. They were, of course, informed of the conditions and the service was entirely voluntary. We had no difficulty, however, in securing the desired number. They were provided with a special protective garment and given definite instructions before leaving New York in regard to the cause and prevention of typhus fever, cholera and other diseases which they were likely to encounter. They were supplied with typewritten copies of this information and none of these nurses developed typhus.

Health of the Nurses in Europe. We have had no cases of serious illness in any of our units except those assigned to Gevgeli, Serbia, and none of our nurses have died during their service in Europe. Unfortunately our second unit arrived in Serbia just before the outbreak of the typhus epidemic. They were assigned to duty in an old tobacco factory utilized as a hospital, and I am sure that Florence Nightingale in the Crimea was never confronted by so hopeless a situation. There were absolutely no hospital facilities, no plumbing, no running water, only the most primitive methods of heating water, most inadequate laundry equipment and practically no clean clothing or bedding, only

piles of soiled clothing which had evidently been accumulating for weeks. The building was terribly overcrowded with several thousand patients and with fever cases scattered throughout the entire hospital, many of them lying on the floor surrounded by other patients as no attempt had apparently been made to classify them. The death rate was appalling and not even sufficient assistance available for the prompt removal and burial of the dead. Every effort was made by our unit to bring order out of this chaos. Beds and hospital furniture were improvised, patients classified and conditions generally improved when our own personnel began to fall ill. Of the six doctors with this unit, five developed typhus and eight out of the twelve nurses. Four nurses remained on duty during all these trying weeks, not only caring for our own people, but directing as far as possible the work of the hospital. Four of our nurses on duty in Belgrade, Serbia, developed typhus fever later, among them Rebecca Watson, who had gone as a volunteer from Pau, France. All of the nurses, however, made good recoveries and have either returned to the United States, or are now on their way home.

Return of the Red Cross Nurses from Europe. All of the nurses sent to Europe by the American Red Cross accepted an appointment for at least six months and none asked for their relief before the expiration of this period. The majority of the nurses remained until the units were recalled, October 1, 1915. Owing to lack of funds, the Red Cross decided to recall on October 1 all of its units with the exception of those on duty in Belgium, this unit having been sent over much later than the other. When this notice was sent to the German authorities they requested permission to retain such members of our units on duty both in Germany and Austria as were willing to remain for continued service in the German prison camps in Russia. The German government offered to pay the salaries and meet all the expenses of the expedition and return the group to the United States at the expiration of their service. After conferring with the Russian government, the Red Cross agreed to allow any of its personnel to remain who desired to do so. Thirty-eight nurses volunteered and left Germany for Petrograd late in September; recent advices from Russia indicate that they are now on duty in or near Moscow. Anna L. Reutinger, a graduate of the New York Hospital Training School for Nurses, was appointed supervising nurse of the entire group. She has had much experience as an executive, both in training school and hospital work, and resigned as directress of nurses in one of the New York hospitals to go to Europe last September as Supervisor of Unit "I." Miss Reutinger's selection was most suitable as she had filled the position of supervising nurse in

Gleiwitz, Germany, for over a year with the utmost tact. Although a native-born American citizen, Miss Reutinger speaks German fluently and has been most acceptable to the officials of the German Government and the German Red Cross.

Has the Service of our Nurses in Europe been Worth While? When we think of the vast numbers of sick and wounded scattered throughout Europe the patients cared for by our units seems pitifully small, although judged by ordinary standards their accomplishments have not been mean. I do believe, however, that we have established in European countries where modern training schools for nurses have not yet been organized a definite standard of nursing which will surely produce results later. The soldiers cared for in our various hospitals came from the most remote corners of Europe and have carried to their homes in Siberia, Poland or the Crimea words of praise for our nurses. Many soldiers returned to the trenches with a written request among their few treasured possessions that in case of injury they be returned to the American Hospital. One of the nurses, the daughter of a Bishop in the Episcopal Church, in summing up her work says: "The soldiers with whom we come in contact love us for our work. The story of it is carried to their homes, to their wives, and to their children, and their hearts go out to the country that has made our work possible." She also tells of a soldier who was seriously ill, a poor Galician, whose language no one could understand. He tried his best to tell them what he wanted but it was two days before they discovered that it was not merely a clean gown he was asking for but an American one with a Red Cross. Our nurses have had a valuable experience which should be of benefit to our own country. They have learned how to care for large numbers of patients all weary, ill, hungry and cold, and to make them comfortable in the shortest possible time without disturbing the routine of the hospital. We have learned that women can be mobilized without confusion, that their chances of illness, when carefully selected seem to be no greater than men's and that they face danger with equanimity. We have learned also the special type nurse most desirable for service of this kind. Out of all this experience we should be able to do a splendid piece of constructive work for our own country. We should be able to guarantee a satisfactory nursing personnel not only for National Relief Work in time of calamity but for efficient service should our country be confronted with that greatest of all disasters—war.